

## *A Proposal: Creating An East End Toronto Cultural Space/Hub*

### *Background*

In late 2013 the Toronto Beach Chorale, a not-for-profit choir, identified the need to pursue a new performance venue in the east end of Toronto as part of its strategic plan, as all current spaces are inadequate and limiting in more than a few ways. Some basic outreach was undertaken by one volunteer Executive member, to acquire information, develop partnership options, etc. Contact and inquiries were made with Artscape in late 2014, leading to becoming part of their Creative Spaces Outside the Core initiative, and their Partnership Exchange in November, 2015.

Meanwhile, in 2014 a City of Toronto report identified 8 culturally underserved areas, and one of them was Ward 31, Beaches – East York, as well as the east end in general. In March of 2015 the Ontario Government named a Special Advisor to the Premier on Community Hubs, and the Framework and Action Plan was completed in the summer of 2015 (see below).

During this time it became clear that the cultural arts community in the east end deserves better, and needs to organize. Contact was made with East End Arts, and two gatherings were held, in January and March of 2016, among numerous representatives of various creative space providers and interest groups, about space in the greater east end community. While valuable information about various spaces was shared, the lack of large, multi-functional cultural spaces was acknowledged, and some interest expressed, a common working group did not emerge from these meetings.

This Proposal is intended to galvanize any interest in creating a multi-use, cross-sectoral cultural (and other use – public service, commercial, retail, etc.?) space into a working group and a vision to move forward.

### *Vision*

*“Community hubs provide a central access point ... to nourish community life ... and play a critical role in building economic and social cohesion in the community.”*

(Community Hubs in Ontario, pg. 7 – see Appendix)

Nurturing the arts is a key component for the nourishing of community life, and in building economic and social cohesion in a diverse and multi-cultural city like Toronto. Whether privately or publicly owned and operated, or a combination of the two, spaces to gather and offer/find a wide variety of creative artistic expression for various audiences/participants is central to this worthy pursuit.

People in the east end generally have to travel downtown to arrive at a cultural “hotspot” that offers a large exhibit or performance. It’s time to change this by creating a space in the east end that enables a reverse flow of people, talent and cultural experiences, as well as enabling the showcasing of east end artists themselves.

While the Toronto Beach Chorale envisions a venue in the east end that adequately addresses its growing needs (a large 300-plus seat performance space that is accessible, technologically current, and culturally dedicated), this vision is not intended to be an exclusive one, but is dependent on collaboration and partnership development to ensure viability and the achievement of a space that benefits the large east end arts community as a whole. The intention is to create flexible, multi-use space that would enhance the work of many different people/artists/organizations and enable economic as well as cultural benefit for the east end community as a whole.

#### *Next Steps*

It is intended that this Proposal will catalyze the creation of an east end cultural space/hub Working Group, with representation from various possible stakeholders. This Proposal is being shared with various potentially interested arts and cultural individuals and organizations, in the hope of building some momentum by agreeing on a mutually agreeable vision and set of goals, identifying potential partners needed to complete the project, including funding sources, conducting specific consultation and fact-finding, and exploring the viability of the vision. Expressions of interest in such a Working Group are welcome by **May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016** so that a planning group can be arranged shortly after that date.

Brian McIntosh, [bwmcintosh4@gmail.com](mailto:bwmcintosh4@gmail.com) or 416-817-2606

Attachment: “*What Is a Community Hub?*” (from *Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan*, pg. 7)